

UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC
AND
SOCIAL COUNCIL



Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.6/1993/15
17 March 1993

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN
Thirty-seventh session
Vienna, 17-26 March 1993
Item 3 of the provisional agenda*

PROGRAMMING AND COORDINATION MATTERS RELATED TO THE
UNITED NATIONS AND THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

Updated information on the status of women in the Secretariat

Report of the Secretary-General

*E/CN.6/1993/1.

INTRODUCTION

1. By means of resolution 47/93 of 16 December 1992, the General Assembly urged the Secretary-General to accord greater priority to the recruitment and promotion of women in posts subject to geographical distribution in order to achieve the goals set out in Assembly resolutions 45/125, 45/239 C and 46/100, which call for an overall participation rate of 35 per cent by 1995 and 25 per cent in posts at the D-1 level and above by 1995.
2. The Secretary-General was requested in resolution 47/93 to implement the action programme outlined in his report on the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat (A/47/508). The action programme stressed the coordination of recruitment, placement and promotion, the setting of departmental targets for increasing the number of women within departments and increasing their numbers in decision-making posts as well as the accountability of managers. The Secretary-General was further urged in that resolution to use the opportunity offered by the United Nations reorganization process to promote more women into senior-level positions. As in previous resolutions, the Secretary-General was again requested to ensure that a progress report was given to the Commission on the Status of Women at its thirty-seventh session.
3. At the end of the forty-fourth session of the General Assembly, it was agreed that, because of the short interval of time between the end of the regular session of the Assembly and the opening of the Commission on the Status of Women, a brief statistical update on the status of women in the Secretariat would be prepared and a progress report rather than a full report would be presented to the Commission covering the six-month period between June and December 1992.
4. The statistical update is given in section I below. Section II describes events that have taken place since June 1992.

I. STATISTICAL UPDATE

5. In paragraph 3 of the Secretary-General's report (A/47/508) it is stated that the percentage of women in posts subject to geographical distribution was 30.6 per cent in June 1992. During the six months ending 31 December 1992, that figure rose to 30.7 per cent. At the end of December 1992, there were 798 women on posts subject to geographical distribution compared with 1,801 men. Taking language posts into account, the share of posts occupied by women rises to 31.8 per cent.
6. In terms of higher level posts (D-1 level and above), there were 37 women (10.4 per cent) of the total of 356 staff at those levels at the end of June 1992. By 31 December 1992, the number of women in such posts rose to 39 (11.2 per cent) of the total of 348 posts at those levels. Comparable figures in December 1991 were 29.9 per cent overall and 9.3 per cent for posts at the D-1 level and above. The increase in the percentage of women occupying higher level posts during 1991-1992 from 9.3 to 11.2, nearly two percentage points, is significant, but still a long way from the goal of 25 per cent set for 1995. In 1990, women occupied only 6.8 per cent of posts at levels D-1 and above. In 1991, it was reported in document ICSC/37/R.16 that the women in geographical posts at levels P-5 and above in all the organizations in the United Nations system represented 3.6 per cent of the total staff. The comparable figure for the Secretariat of the United Nations was 14.4 per cent. The Secretariat figure for the end of 1992 is 16.6 per cent.

7. The placement and promotion system involving an annual comprehensive grade-by-grade review is in force, but the 1992 exercise is not complete and statistics are not yet available.

8. The number of women recruited into the Secretariat of the United Nations during the calendar year 1992 was 10 compared with 17 men. These figures are far lower than the 44 women and 85 men recruited in 1991 and reflect the suspension of regular recruitment in effect as a result of the ongoing restructuring of the Secretariat.

II. EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES SINCE JUNE 1992

9. In October 1992, the Secretary-General accepted the recommendations contained in the sixth report of the Steering Committee for the Improvement of the Status of Women in the Secretariat. He informed the staff by bulletin ST/SGB/252 of 20 October 1992 that he accepted the recommendations on appointment and promotion procedures and had directed that those be incorporated into administrative instructions which, in turn, would form an integral part of the appointment and promotion process. The measures on promotion and recruitment direct that in departments and offices with less than 35 per cent of women overall, and in those with less than 25 per cent women at levels P-5 and above, vacancies overall, particularly in the latter group, will be filled, when there are one or more female candidates whose qualifications match all the requirements for a vacant post, by one of those female candidates. With regard to recruitment, two exceptions apply. The first is when the post has been vacant for 12 months and despite the best efforts of all concerned it has not been possible to identify or secure a qualified woman, and the second, when the post is being filled through a competitiveness examination.

10. Administrative instruction ST/AI/382 of 3 March 1993 includes the Steering Committee's recommendations on appointment and promotion. In addition, it is stipulated in the instruction that since the current gender distribution within the Secretariat does not provide a sufficient pool of women candidates who could be promoted to higher level posts between now and 1995, effective immediately, qualified women presently in the service of the Organization under any type of appointment, with a good performance record and at least one year's experience in the United Nations system including the United Nations programmes, will be regarded as internal candidates for available professional vacancies. Similar considerations will apply to qualified women serving with specialized agencies and subsidiary organs within the common system.

11. Also in October 1992, circulars on sexual harassment were issued. Those circulars included the Secretary-General's bulletin entitled "Promotion of equal treatment of men and women in the Secretariat and prevention of sexual harassment" (ST/SGB/253 of 29 October 1992), an information circular entitled "Guidelines for promoting equal treatment of men and women in the Secretariat" (ST/IC/1992/67 of 29 October 1992) and an Administrative Instruction entitled "Procedures for dealing with sexual harassment" (ST/AI/379 of 29 October 1992). These circulars were distributed to all Secretariat staff as well as to the Heads of UNICEF, UNFPA, UNRWA, UNDP, UNU and UNHCR, in the belief that these would be of help to them in formulating their own procedures for dealing with the matter. In addition, these circulars were included in the documentation of the recent session of the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (ACC/1993/PER/R.5 of 8 February 1993).

12. In his November 1992 statement to the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly (A/47/508), the Secretary-General referred to the shortage of women in managerial posts and said that he intended to do all he could to bring the balance in policy-level positions as close to parity as possible by 1995. Since then, he has appointed five senior women: three at the Under-Secretary-General level, and two at the Assistant Secretary-General level.

13. At the end of 1992, the Secretary-General asked the Office of Human Resources Management to prepare a plan of action for 1993 and 1994 in the context of improving the status of women in the Secretariat by 1995. Elements of this plan include succession planning, the wide use of advertising vacant posts in professional journals in order to attract qualified women to fill vacant posts, limiting long-term appointments as exceptions to the freeze to women and, in an effort to expand the pool of women at higher levels (P-5 and above), considering women who have served in the system, either in United Nations programmes or in the specialized agencies, as internal candidates for purposes of recruitment provided they meet the geographical and qualification requirements of the vacant posts. The plan also calls for efforts to increase the number of posts available for successful candidates from competitive examinations.

14. On the occasion of International Women's Day (8 March 1993) the Secretary-General, once again, reiterated his personal commitment to improving the gender balance of women and men in the Secretariat by 1995, the year of the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace (1995) and the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations. The Secretary-General as well as his senior staff are working towards making the composition of the United Nations reflective of the world. The active cooperation of Member States is crucial to this endeavour.